MEXICAN PRINTS FROM THE CALLE COLLECTION:

The Taller de Gráfica Popular and Graphic Commitment

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FORWARD

The University Art Museum at Colorado State is delighted to present an exhibition and publication featuring the Calle Collection of Mexican Prints. Art collector José Calle, parent of a former Colorado State University student, came to us in 2009 with the idea of developing a program based upon his stellar collection of 20th-century prints and books, primarily from the collaborative printmaking workshop known as the *Taller de Gráfica Popular* (hereafter, TGP). Thanks to his generosity the museum has the opportunity to make this fascinating work available to a Colorado audience.

Although José Calle has collected a wide variety of works of art, including 20th-century American prints and contemporary photographs, this collection holds a special place in his heart. The Colombian-born Calle began to travel to Mexico on business trips some twenty years ago. A chance meeting with Jorge Sanabria, the owner of *La Estampa* bookstore, led to a passion for the prints produced by the TGP. Calle describes Sanabria as a "real intellectual and academic, well versed in Mexico's political and artistic history" and as the "mentor or unobtrusive curator" providing the "historical perspective that glues the collection."[1]

La Estampa was not only a commercial venture but also a gathering place for discourse. Participating in these gatherings when he traveled to Mexico strengthened Calle's belief that artists could, and should, reflect political realities. Calle eloquently writes, "The concept of political, economic and social equality, for me, is indispensible to a healthy society and a functioning democracy."[2] In the TGP he found a group of artists who shared his interests in social justice and artistic engagement toward these ends. To Calle, the themes that the TGP engages, including "labor vs. capital, liberty vs. oppression… freedom of expression, ownership of natural resources, private vs. public," are eternal struggles and conflicts that cause these prints, despite their specific historical context, to remain relevant today.[3]

It is José Calle's vision that has shaped this exhibition and we are extremely grateful for his support. However, the realization of this project is also due to the generosity of our sponsors. We are most grateful to Laura Avila and Rocío Espinosa at Impresión Arte for coordinating the catalogue printing and to José

1 José Calle to Linda Frickman, August 11, 2011, e-mail correspondence.
2 ibid.
3 ibid.

Kuri at AGUSA, Artes Gráficas Unidas for making this publication possible. Colorado Humanities, the Lilla B. Morgan Memorial Fund, the City of Fort Collins Fort Fund, and the FUNd endowment at CSU provided critical support for the exhibition and associated programs.

This venture is truly an interdisciplinary endeavor, made possible with the assistance of a number of individuals from across the university. Dr. Doug Yarrington of the Department of History wrote the insightful essay placing the Calle Collection into the context of 19th- and 20th-century Mexican politics. My co-writer and colleague, Dr. Eleanor Moseman of the Department of Art, worked tirelessly to situate the prints into the context of international modernism and a complex art historical debate. Dr. Maricela DeMirjyn of the Department of Ethnic Studies coordinated community outreach and kindly reviewed the art historical essay, providing us with discerning feedback. We are also grateful to our colleague in the Department of Art, Dr. Catherine DiCesare, and our colleague in the Department of History, Dr. Jared Orsi, for their careful readings and astute suggestions. Art Professor Stephen Simons assisted us with the technical aspects of identifying print media and Art Education Professor Dr. Patrick Fahey prepared curricular material for teachers and visitors. Design of this catalogue and the associated exhibition interpretive materials were ably handled by Graphic Design graduate student Deborah Craven. Joe Mendoza of CSU's Office of Creative Services photographed the prints.

Behind the scenes the University Art Museum staff completed all the unsung tasks that bring projects like this to fruition. Collections Manager/Registrar Suzanne Hale handled logistical aspects of shipping the prints to Colorado State and preparing them for exhibition and publication with aplomb. In addition she oversaw the work of our adept museum interns, Corie Audette, Sarah Mosman and Erin Herburger. Jennifer Clary, Marketing and Publicity Director for the School of the Arts, graciously handled all public relations tasks. Keith Jentzsch, our Program and Exhibition Coordinator and an enormously gifted preparator, coordinated the exhibition installation. To all of them my heartfelt thanks for their professionalism and enthusiasm.

Linda Frickman
Director, University Art Museum

MEXICAN HISTORY, POLITICS, AND PRINTS IN THE CONTENTIOUS TWENTIETH CENTURY

The prints in this exhibition, like the history of modern Mexico, revolve around the Revolution of 1910-1920 and its legacy. Led by popular figures such as Emiliano Zapata and "Pancho" Villa, the revolution overthrew the dictator Porfirio Díaz, who had ruled the nation since 1876 and who claimed to have modernized Mexico but whose policies favored Mexico's elite and foreign investors. Peasants and workers, outraged at Díaz's indifference to their well-being, ensured the triumph of the revolution. Beginning in the 1920s, Mexico's revolutionary government sought to promote a new nationalist culture that expressed the historical roots and contemporary struggles of the Mexican people.

Artists sympathetic to the revolution—from the famed Diego Rivera to less well-known artists—found inspiration in the works of José Guadalupe Posada (1852-1913) who had designed and produced thousands of prints during the Díaz period and the early years of the revolution.[1] Posada was a craftsman and artisan, the owner and operator of a print shop, rather than an elite artist. His use of satire and irony, often employing his trade-mark skeleton figures *(calaveras)* (cat. 1, undated; cat. 2, 1914; cat.3, 1914), seemed to capture the popular cynicism aimed at Díaz's brand of "progress" that had led to the Revolution.[2]

But Mexico's rulers after the revolution—and the artists they sponsored—were much more caught up in the ideological conflicts of the 20th century than Posada, whose work was too idiosyncratic to conform to any ideology. The revolutionary constitution of 1917 committed the government, at least in theory, to land reform, labor rights, economic nationalism, and the creation of a secular society. Many revolutionary leaders, perhaps more than the Mexican masses they claimed to represent, felt sympathy with the newly established Soviet Union and were alarmed by the rise of fascism in Italy, Germany, Spain, and Japan in the years that followed.

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1 Dawn Ades, "The Mexican Printmaking Tradition, c.1900-1930," in Dawn Ades and Alison McClean, *Revolution on Paper: Mexican Prints*, *1910-1960* (London: British Museum Press, 2009), 13-15.

2 Montserrat Galí Boadella, "José Guadalupe Posada: Tradition and Modernity in Images," in *Posada: Mexican Engraver* (Seville: Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, 2008), 45-62.

These ideological conflicts reached their climax during the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940), perhaps Mexico's most popular president. Cárdenas distributed more land to peasant families than any other president and was a staunch supporter of organized labor. Most famously, he nationalized U.S. and European oil companies in 1938 after they refused to honor the Mexican Supreme Court's settlement of a labor dispute, a refusal that seemed to represent an all-too-common disregard for Mexico's sovereignty. In the eyes of his compatriots, Cárdenas's defiant action restored national dignity after centuries of colonial and imperialist subjugation.[3]

It was during Cárdenas's presidency, in 1937, that a group of artists formed the *Taller de Gráfica Popular* (the People's Graphic Workshop; hereafter, TGP). The TGP had loose affiliations with Cárdenas's administration, producing artwork that was used in public schools and posters for government organizations. At the same time, some TGP artists were members of the more radical Mexican Communist Party but supported many of Cárdenas's policies.[4]

Cárdenas and the artists in the TGP believed that the growing political conflict between the left and right in Europe threatened their goal of creating a revolutionary state in Mexico. A number of prints in this exhibition comment on the ideological polarization of the 1930s and '40s and reflect the TGP's left-wing perspective on both Mexican and international issues, with domestic and international concerns often intertwined.

The TGP artists' portrayal of Mexican society highlights their concern for the working class. In some of the prints, such as Pablo O'Higgins's depiction of a group of laborers during a meal break (cat. 20, 1948), the artists convey the dignity of the working class, which was itself a powerful statement in a traditionally hierarchical society such as Mexico. Other works, including several of the posters, overtly call for solidarity among and with Mexican workers as they confront exploitation and repression. A number of the pieces in the exhibition reflect the TGP's conviction that, even after the revolution, the problems of the working class were rooted in a capitalist system directed by wealthy Mexicans, foreign corporations, and imperialist powers.

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3 Alan Knight, "The Rise and Fall of Cardenismo, c.1930-c.1946," in Leslie Bethell, ed., *Mexico since Independence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 279-284.

4 Alison McClean, "Committed to Print: Printmaking in Mexico and Beyond, 1934-1960," in *Revolution on Paper*, 27-42.

The TGP's intertwining of anti-imperialism and solidarity with the masses is sometimes revealed in the choice of subject matter. For example, Leopoldo Méndez's heroic portrait (cat. 13, undated) of Father Miguel Hidalgo, the village priest who initiated Mexico's independence movement against Spain on September 16, 1810, depicts him as a visionary leader. This interpretation of Hidalgo echoes the popular, nationalist murals by the famous painters Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco, who presented Hidalgo as fighting both to end colonialism and to liberate the Mexican masses who followed him into battle. Anti-imperialist and working class sympathies are expressed more explicitly in prints depicting Mexican laborers suffering at the hands of Standard Oil, U.S. Steel, Swift, and the United Fruit Company.

Much of the international focus in the prints reflects the Mexican left's preoccupation with fascism in the 1930s and '40s.[5] Anti-fascist sentiments emerge clearly in prints by Isidoro Ocampo, Jesús Escobedo, Leopoldo Méndez, Ángel Bracho, and José Chávez Morado. This political and artistic concern developed throughout the 1930s but was greatly intensified by the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939. This devastating conflict pitted Spain's democratically elected government—a coalition of leftist groups known collectively as Republicans—against rebel army officers and their conservative allies under the command of General Francisco Franco, who were known as Nationalists. The political polarization within Spain was exacerbated when Germany's Adolf Hitler and Italy's Benito Mussolini aided the Nationalists, thus strengthening the fascist members of Franco's alliance, and the Soviet Union aided the Republicans, which elevated the importance of communists among the Republicans.

The Spanish Civil War awakened such deep passions in Mexico, and throughout most of Latin America, because the issues that led to the war in Spain were quite similar to those that divided the political left and right in Spain's former colonies.[6] While these issues included land reform, labor rights, foreign investment, and women's rights, Spaniards fought most intensely over the proper place of the Catholic Church in their society, with the Nationalists staunchly defending the traditional privileges of the Church while the Republicans believed that the modernization of Spain required the establishment of a secular society. The Mexican left, Cárdenas, and most of Mexico's post-revolutionary leaders had sought similar restrictions on the Church's role in education and politics, which had led Mexican Catholics to rebel in the Cristero War

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5 Monica A. Rankin, *México, La Patria! Propaganda and Production during World War II* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 13-57.

6 Mark Falcoff and Fredrick B. Pike, eds., *The Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939: American Hemispheric Perspectives* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982).

of 1926-1929. Some Mexican conservatives who defended the Church also embraced fascism, adding to the perceived parallels between Mexico's divisions and those in Europe.

When Lázaro Cárdenas completed his term as president in 1940, Franco had triumphed in Spain and World War II was already entering its second year. Cárdenas's hand-picked successor, Manuel Ávila Camacho, took a conservative, pro-business stance on domestic issues but continued Cárdenas's anti-fascist foreign policy. Mexico supported the U.S. war effort after Pearl Harbor and, following German attacks on Mexican shipping in 1942, it formally entered the war on the side of the United States.[7] Germany's attack on the Soviet Union meant that Mexico was also on the same side as the Soviets. When the Allies achieved victory in 1945, the artists of TGP emphasized the Soviet contribution to the defeat of Germany, as seen in Ángel Bracho's poster *Victory* (cat. 14, 1945).

The Mexican left, having generally accepted the necessity of an alliance with the U.S. in order to defeat the fascist powers, once again saw the U.S. as its principle foreign adversary by the late 1940s, as the Cold War reshaped international politics. One print from the Cold War era—Bracho's *OEA & USA* (cat. 15, after 1948)—even implies that the combination of U.S. corporate and military might, featuring goose-stepping soldiers and a German-style pointed helmet, represented a threat reminiscent of the recently defeated powers. Into the 1960s, the TGP continued to produce work suggesting that Mexico's sovereignty and economic resources were under threat and required vigilant defense.

The TGP artists demonstrated ideological consistency throughout their often long careers. By contrast, Mexico's government, while continuing to pay lip-service to the revolution, embraced increasingly conservative, pro-business policies as the decades passed. These policies resulted in some extended periods of impressive economic growth, especially from the 1940s into the 1970s, but some Mexicans wondered whether their leaders had abandoned the egalitarian and nationalist ideals championed by revolutionary icons such as Zapata and Villa.

In 1994, a new group of Mexican revolutionaries, the self-proclaimed Zapatistas of the southern state of Chiapas, rose up against the national government. While the immediate trigger of the rebellion was the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with the U.S. and Canada, the rebels criticized what they

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7 Rankin, *México, La Patria*, 107-120.

saw as the government's decades-long departure from the nationalist and quasi-socialist policies of the hey-day of the revolution. The masked, pipe-smoking leader of the Zapatistas, Sub-Comandante Marcos, represented sympathetically in Sergio Santamaría's *Chiapas* (cat. 34, 1998), never posed a serious military threat to the government in Mexico City. But Marcos deftly used the media—through proclamations, interviews, and increasingly the internet—to skewer Mexico's political and economic elites using his ironic wit and sarcasm, often with devastating effect.[8] In this, he followed in the tradition not only of Zapata, but of Posada as well. Santamaría's work indicates that the tradition of printmaking as a means of social and political commentary is alive and well.

Doug Yarrington

8 John Womack, ed., *Rebellion in Chiapas: An Historical Reader* (New York: The Free Press, 1999).

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PRINT ACTIVISM: SOCIO-POLITICAL PRINTMAKING IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY MEXICO

From 1937 to 1960 the Mexican printmaking collective, known as the *Taller de Gráfica Popular* (the People's Graphic Workshop; hereafter TGP), produced thousands of prints, posters, broadsides, portfolios, and books. This Mexico City-based organization flourished in spite of the prominence of the more widely known Mexican Muralist Movement. The TGP had an open, anti-elitist policy whereby women, the poor, indigenous peoples, and artists of color were welcome. This inclusiveness extended from the TGP's broad acceptance of stylistic difference to collaborative working practices. Despite an extremely productive output and a prestigious record of exhibitions, awards, and museum purchases, the art of this prolific printmaking atelier remains under the radar in the history of modern art. This essay will introduce the *Taller* through the prints of the Calle Collection, placing them within a national context and into the scope of international modernism. Although relatively small (some 40+ prints and books), the Calle Collection, consisting of iconic examples as well as lesser known prints, is an excellent overview of the thematic and formal concerns of this workshop. Further, in compiling these artworks José Calle has bookended his collection with examples by José Guadalupe Posada, the popular turn-of-the-century printmaker whom a one-time director of the TGP called their "authentic grandfather,"[1] and the contemporary artist Sergio Santamaría, thus defining a trajectory of the importance of the graphic arts in Mexico.

The prints included in this exhibition demonstrate an awareness and use of a politicized printmaking tradition stemming from a 19th-century *avant-garde* art capable of meaningful criticism. TGP artists used the print as a means to reach and educate a popular audience through socio-political critique especially concerning fascism and imperialism. During the course of the TGP's existence a shift occurred in its relations with the United States with the onset of McCarthyism and the Cold War. This shift comes with deep-seated

1 Hannes Meyer as quoted in Deborah Caplow, *Leopoldo Méndez: Revolutionary Art and the Mexican Print* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 176.

implications leading to the workshop's omission from the western art historical narrative. This situation is inextricably linked to a debate over the roles of abstraction and realism, individual expression and social activism, in defining the nature of modernism. The definition of modernism and modern art is complex, nuanced, and contested, complicated by the use of the term in different political and geographic locations. While the most common understanding of modernism only takes into account formal appearance, at the same time the issue of critical contemporary content is of equal import. By exploring these issues this essay contributes to recent and increasing scholarship on the TGP and a more holistic and global understanding of modern art.

One of the founders of the TGP, Pablo O'Higgins (b. Salt Lake City, 1904, d. Mexico City, 1983), summarized the aims of the workshop in the 1930s. He wrote, "What gave us strength and allowed us to develop in a useful way was that immediately after getting together our first plan of action was to decide how to connect our graphic art with the immediate problems of Mexico…. Thus the TGP achieved a secure and dynamic base that permitted it to interpret not only Mexican events, but also international affairs…".[2] The interrelated focus of domestic and international concerns is highlighted in the Calle Collection. In tandem with the rise of fascism in Europe (Germany, Spain, Italy) Mexico also experienced internal struggles against right-wing forces. The artist José Chávez Morado (b. Silao, Guanajuato, 1909, d. Guanajuato, 2002) made two prints shortly after the founding of the TGP reviling fascism in his own country. In the first (cat. 16, 1938) a regional governor orders the assassination of unarmed workers protesting outside the town hall. Morado demonstrates the TGP's ongoing solidarity with the working class by emphasizing the misuse of power and cowardly actions of a dictatorial politician through portrayal of a real event.[3] In the second (cat. 17, 1939) Morado presents a caricature of the Mexican press as a mouthpiece for foreign agendas. The seated figure represents pro-Franco Spanish residents in Mexico driving support for fascism.[4]

The TGP's international focus is seen in two posters from a series publicizing regular meetings of the League for German Culture in Mexico, an anti-fascist group supporting exiles from Adolf Hitler's Germany. TGP artist Jesús Escobedo (b. El Oro, Mexico, 1918, d. 1978) utilizes "a potent symbol of the Mexican people, used frequently in work allied with revolutionary purposes"[5] in one of these posters to address

2 Caplow, 124-5.

3 Dawn Adès and Alison McClean, *Revolution on Paper: Mexican Prints 1910-1960* (London: British Museum, 2009), 143.

4 Adès and McClean, 142.

5 Caplow, 29.

foreign ills. In *How to Combat Fascism* (cat. 7, 1939), three of the four figures striding in perfect lockstep with arms linked and without hierarchy represent the "popular trinity"[6] of the peasant, worker, and soldier. They are joined by a fourth figure in a suit, perhaps a politician or educator, a motif that fits the TGP's advocacy for educating the masses. A second poster in the series by Isidoro Ocampo (b. Veracruz, 1910, d. 1983), entitled *Fascism: The Japanese Fascist* (cat. 6, 1939), depicts Emperor Hirohito as a parasitic pest with devil horns, encroaching upon Chinese territory. These posters reveal the TGP's expansive knowledge of world events and the relationship between domestic and international politics.

TGP co-founder Leopoldo Méndez (b. Mexico City, 1902, d. Mexico City, 1969) blends domestic and international concerns in his lithographic flyer, *Imperialism and War* (cat. 8, 1938). This print, like many in the TGP oeuvre, demonstrates a savvy knowledge of a politicized artistic tradition extending back to Francisco Goya. The reference can be seen threefold in this flyer: Méndez references Goya's use of the print medium for the fanciful social critique in the 1798-99 series *Los Caprichos* and the gripping realities of violence in the 1810-1820 series *The Disasters of War*. The enlarged figure with weapons for arms and legs, destroying towns as he strides across the landscape, echoes Goya's painted image of a destructive Colossus decimating the Spanish landscape, as pointed out by Deborah Caplow.[7] Méndez updates this 19th-century image by wrapping his Colossus in fascist flags referencing General Francisco Franco's actions and quotes Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas's call for Mexican workers' solidarity with the "elimination of imperialist wars."[8]

How characteristic of the TGP that ephemeral objects, such as the aforementioned posters and flyer, bear such loaded artistic and political content! They also demonstrate a conscious decision about the distribution of work to a popular audience that is often denied access to the arts. This points to the TGP's agenda of educating the people and the reasons for their choice of media. Typically TGP artists worked in linocut and lithography, which were more expedient than the time-consuming woodcut process. This allowed them, when necessary, to immediately respond to events and political circumstances, and to have as little as a one-day turnaround for designing, printing, and distributing their work.[9] Recognizing the temporal nature of their message, the artists used ephemeral and inexpensive paper for public work, as opposed to the gallery stock that they employed for exhibition prints. Runs of up to 3000 posters

6 Caplow, 29.
7 Caplow, 140.
8 Caplow, 140.
9 Caplow, 131.

have been documented[10] and attest to the TGP's desire to blanket the city with their visual statements to quickly reach a large viewership. Embracing the new art of the motion picture, Méndez collaborated with Mexican filmmakers. He produced a series of prints for Emilio Fernández's 1947 film *Rio Escondido* that encapsulated the action of the film's narrative and acted as backdrops for credits. He called these filmic collaborations "moving murals"[11] that have the ability to reach an even broader audience than the muralist movement itself. One print from the series, *The Torches* (cat. 9, 1947), shows awareness of a socialist precedent in European printmaking by borrowing its composition and peasant iconography from German Expressionist artist Kaethe Kollwitz. Méndez quotes Kollwitz's frequent depiction of peasant figures surging forward in a diagonal movement that expresses the urgency of the moment.

A prime example of the concern to reach a broad audience is modeled by the 1945 linocut *Victory* (cat. 14, 1945) by Ángel Bracho (b. Mexico City, 1911, d. 2005). In this poster with a rare celebratory message, the TGP declares with image and caption Mexican solidarity with the Allies at the close of World War II. This is characteristic of the TGP's communal outlook. In the lower half of the image symbols of fascism are laid waste, including the swastika, fasces, and the monstrous visage of a defeated Hitler. In the upper half the Allies' flags rise victoriously; notably the Soviet flag is prominently featured and flanked by smaller American and British flags, a declaration of the TGP's communist sympathies. It is imperative to recognize this political outlook in order to understand the fate of the TGP and their imagery with the escalation of the Cold War. Even the choice of a red and black color scheme is a conscious appropriation of Soviet *avant-garde* aesthetics in post-revolutionary Russia, such as those employed by the Constructivists. This early 20th-century movement also emphasized artistic production in the service of public education, often in the form of posters and other ephemera.

With the onset of the Cold War, and McCarthyism especially, the content of TGP work shifted away from pro-American attitudes and toward a pointed critique of U.S. imperialism and policy. Méndez's *The Sleep of Imperialism* (cat. 11, 1950) declares the TGP's wariness of U.S. capitalism. In this lithograph Méndez depicts a fat capitalist sleeping on a divan while draped by an American flag and dreaming of money bags. Meanwhile a drawn curtain reveals the outcome of capitalist imperialism, namely row upon row of war dead. Redolent with quotations from artistic predecessors, especially Goya, Édouard Manet, and Honoré

10 Helga Prignitz, *TGP—Ein Grafiker-Kollektiv in Mexico, von 1937 – 1977* (Berlin: Verlag Richard Seitz, 1981), 11.

11 Caplow, 204.

Daumier, the artist once again demonstrates a deep understanding of printmaking traditions and protest imagery. Méndez's mark-making recalls Daumier's caricature-like style, while the composition echoes Manet's *Olympia*. The most obvious allusion is to Goya's *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* from his series *Los Caprichos.* Goya makes visible the inner thoughts of his sleeping figure which becomes a model for Méndez's attack on capitalism.

The linocut *Mexico, Master of Your Resources* (cat. 27, after 1952) by Celia Calderón (b. Mexico City, 1921, d. Mexico City, 1969) depicts a protective stance against capitalist and imperialist incursion. In the global race for resources, United States industrialists vied for control over foreign mineral, oil, and agricultural wealth. Calderón personifies Mexico as a peasant woman gazing with a look of melancholy at an unseen aggressor while protectively embracing the image of oil derricks, factory chimneys, domestic transportation, fishing, and farming industries. Behind her, merging with the mountain landscape surrounding Mexico City, the artist includes the ancient Aztec symbol of an eagle holding a snake in its beak, a symbol that also serves as the central image on the Mexican national flag created at the close of the Revolution in 1921. The inclusion of indigenous imagery, also utilized by the Mexican Muralists, was another typical TGP strategy for developing a national iconography, here utilized in the service of defending national interests. In 1948 member states in North, Central, and South America signed a charter creating the Organization of American States (Organización de los Estados Americanos, or OEA). While the organization was meant to protect the material resources of its members, TGP artist Bracho expressed suspicion of underlying capitalist control in his linocut *OEA & USA. OAS Organization of American States* (cat. 15, after 1948), portraying an imagined military attack on Latin American states. In this complex composition a curtain labeled OEA parts to reveal Wall Street backing for U.S. aggression, unveiling the suspected involvement of American economic power.

Other TGP prints were more direct in their attacks on particular corporate entities. The Calle Collection includes two prints with emphatic rejection of specific U.S. companies. In the first, Arturo García Bustos (b. Mexico City, 1927) presents an image of exploitation in his linocut *The Ballad of the United Fruit Company* (cat. 22, undated), a work that names not only the United Fruit Company, but also Chesterfield, Esso, and U.S. Steel. The composition is divided into two parts: in the lower half a peasant strums a guitar in a tavern while a critique of corporate dominance unfolds in the upper portion. An overseer abusing workers, a Mexican laborer hanging from the gallows, soldiers confronting unarmed peasants, and planes dropping bombs on villages illustrate typical TGP attitudes in defense of Mexico during the Cold War period. Ignacio Aguirre's (b. San

Sebastián, Jalisco, 1900, d. 1990) biting satire entitled *Dog Soup* (cat. 30, undated) calls upon the Mexican tradition of the *calaveras*, or animated skeletons, used frequently by Posada. *Calaveras* peasants queue up across a desolate desert landscape for sustenance served from a pot labeled "Swift," referencing an American meatpacking corporation founded in the 19th century. These TGP critiques of industrial exploitation run parallel to other Cold War concerns.

Across the globe people were increasingly terrified about the threat of atomic annihilation in the wake of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki attacks at the close of the war. The TGP's interest in this theme is evident in two very different prints. One TGP artist known as Carlos D.A. (life dates unknown) is explicit, visually portraying the menace of the atomic age and a post-apocalyptic landscape. In *Atomic Monster* (cat. 31, undated) he depicts a throng of emaciated children staring at a mushroom cloud while a male figure in a martyr's pose protectively gestures towards a reclining woman aborting distorted figures. This morbid image alludes to the ongoing potential devastation of atomic power. Atomic rain takes the form of dollars and coins, as tanks roll over the horizon in this nightmarish scene. In a poster entitled *Help Stop this Crime. Two North Americas Were Sentenced to Die in the Electric Chair on January 12th. Ethel and Julius Rosenberg* (cat. 18, 1953) TGP artist Francisco Mora (b. Uruapan, Michoacán, 1922, d. Cuernavaca, Mexico, 2002) confronts another aspect of Cold War politics. In the arms race of the 1950s, U.S. entities suspicious of internal spies accused the Rosenbergs of selling atomic secrets to the Soviets. Mora, seeking to intercede on behalf of the accused, creates a poster that foreshadows their execution that same year.

The Rosenbergs were among many who fell victim to anti-communist McCarthyism. Throughout the United States individuals in the art, filmmaking, and cultural industries were subject to accusations of communist sympathies. The TGP artists, many of whom were card-carrying members of the Mexican Communist Party, were no exception to the blacklist in America. Before the Cold War the TGP had enjoyed widespread support in the United States. Collected by major museums, including the Museum of Modern Art, exhibited widely, and awarded prestigious Guggenheim Fellowships, members of the workshop were welcomed in the United States. Simultaneously, American artists enjoyed visits as TGP guest members in Mexico City, including prominent African-American printmaker Elizabeth Catlett and her then-husband Charles White. In 1951, however, the U.S. Department of State declared an end to TGP travel in the United States and included TGP artists on a list of communist front organizations.[12] It took two decades for the TGP members to regain travel

12 Caplow, 218.

rights to the United States, and more than four decades until a major exhibition of their work was mounted there. Meanwhile they sought a new audience and found exhibition opportunities in Europe, especially in Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R.

Complicating the TGP's reception is a contentious art world debate over the nature of modernism, the role of abstraction versus figuration, and ideological implications embedded in the divide between formalism and realism with political content. This debate, beginning in the 1920s, intensified against the backdrop of Cold War politics. The American art movement known as Abstract Expressionism was heralded in the postwar years as the sole direction for "pure painting" and modernism as propounded by influential critic Clement Greenberg. In fact, Michael Leja has identified an American governmental strategy utilizing formalist Abstract Expressionism as a propagandistic tool in Cold War ideology to advance American values of individualism and democracy in opposition to Soviet collectivism.[13] Exhibitions featuring this American brand of abstraction travelled throughout Western Europe as symbols of freedom in opposition to Soviet-inculcated ideology. Whereas Soviet governments espoused figural art as a vehicle for propaganda, the United States offered European audiences abstraction as a metaphor for free individual expression.

In light of this Cold War exhibition history, Alison McClean notes that in Europe "exhibitions by the TGP acted as a demonstration of a powerful counterpoint" to American abstraction.[14] But, this seemingly easy binary of abstraction and figuration is more complicated. In Soviet Socialist Realism, artists implemented a government-imposed idealistic message to convince the populace that Soviet life was good. In TGP imagery, on the contrary, prints displayed a wider variety of messages about the true conditions lived by the peasants and the working class. While Socialist Realism was a mouthpiece for the government, the TGP maintained a critical stance. In the strident language of Cold War politics these distinctions within figural art were glossed over.

The Cold War categories pitted American capitalism against Soviet communism. This polemic lumped all art, whether it fit or not, into these two camps, ignoring the complexities of expression from other parts of the globe. In Mexico the TGP's art, concerned as it was with national interests and international politics, needed a means appropriate to its message. This resulted not in mere emulation of Soviet Socialist Realism, but

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13 Michael Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism: Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), especially 5, 47-48, 326.

14 Alison McClean, "Committed to Print: Printmaking and Politics in Mexico and Beyond, 1934-1960" in Adès and McClean, *Revolution on Paper*, 40.

rather in critical figuration in the spirit of 19th-century *avant-garde* modernism. Clearly the TGP's contribution to these political and artistic debates indicates the need to treat this print workshop as a central component of global modernism. Art historical scholarship of recent decades has rightly adopted omitted histories, like those of the Russian *avant-garde* and more recently Eastern European modernism, to expand our picture of the dynamics of art in the twentieth century. The *Taller de Gráfica Popular*, with its complex prints and depth of meanings that we have only begun to explore in this essay, deserves more attention. These sophisticated artists with their technical mastery, art historical knowledge, and layered socio-political content have left us with an opportunity to expand the conversation about the nature of modernism.

Eleanor Moseman and Linda Frickman

1.

JOSÉ GUADALUPE POSADA

La Calavera del Siglo XX
The Skeleton of the 20th Century

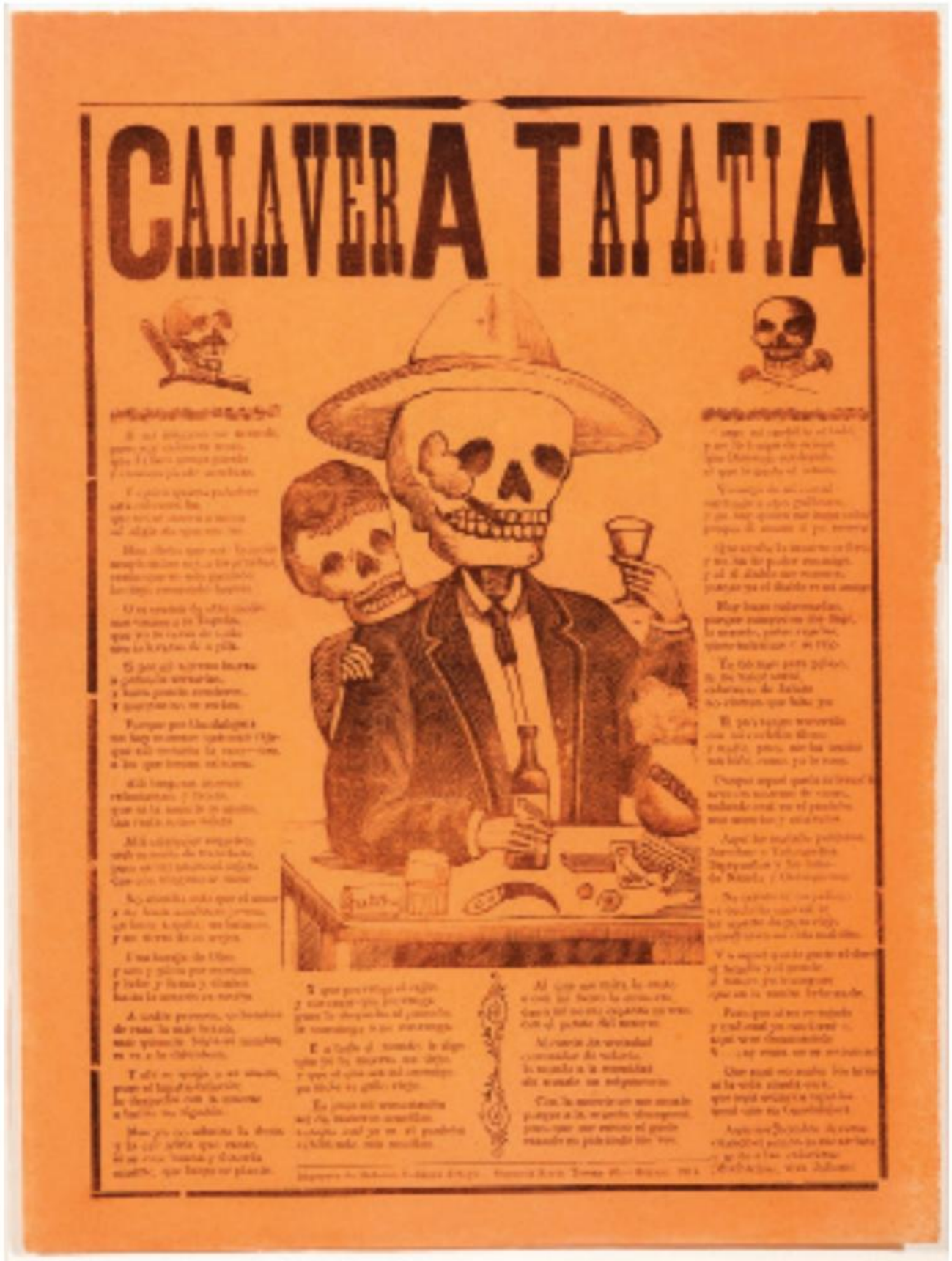
Broadsheet with illustration by José Guadalupe Posada
35½ x 25.8cm, 14 x 10 1/8” (image)
37 x 26.7cm, 14 5/8 x 10 ½” (sheet)

2.

JOSÉ GUADALUPE POSADA

Gran Baile de Calaveras, 1914
Grand Dance of Skeletons

Broadsheet with illustration by
José Guadalupe Posada
35.2 x 25.9cm, 13 7/8 x 10 1/4” (image)
36.5 x 28 cm, 14 3/4 x 11 1/8” (sheet)



3.

JOSÉ GUADALUPE POSADA

Calavera Tapatia, 1914

A Skeleton from Guadalajara

Broadsheet with illustration by José Guadalupe Posada
35.7 x 26.5cm, 14 1/8 x 10 1/4” (image)
40.5 x 30cm, 15 15/16 x 11 ¾” (sheet)

4.

JOSÉ GUADALUPE POSADA

La Tarantula

The Tarantula

Relief etching, restrike
22 x 21.8 cm, 8 5/8 x 8 5/8” (image)
46 x 34.6cm, 18 3/16 x 13 5/8” (sheet)

5.

JOSÉ GUADALUPE POSADA

El Baquero de la Muerte
Death Cowboy

Relief etching, restrike
22.5 x 21.5cm, 8 2/8 x 8 ½" (image)
46 x 30 ½cm, 18 1/8 x 13 ¼" (sheet)

6.

ISIDORO OCAMPO

El Fascismo. El Fascismo japonés, 1939

Fascism. The Japanese Fascist

Lithograph
44 x 60cm, 17 3/8 x 23 5/8” (image)
46.7 x 67.5cm, 18 3/8 x 26 5/8” (sheet)

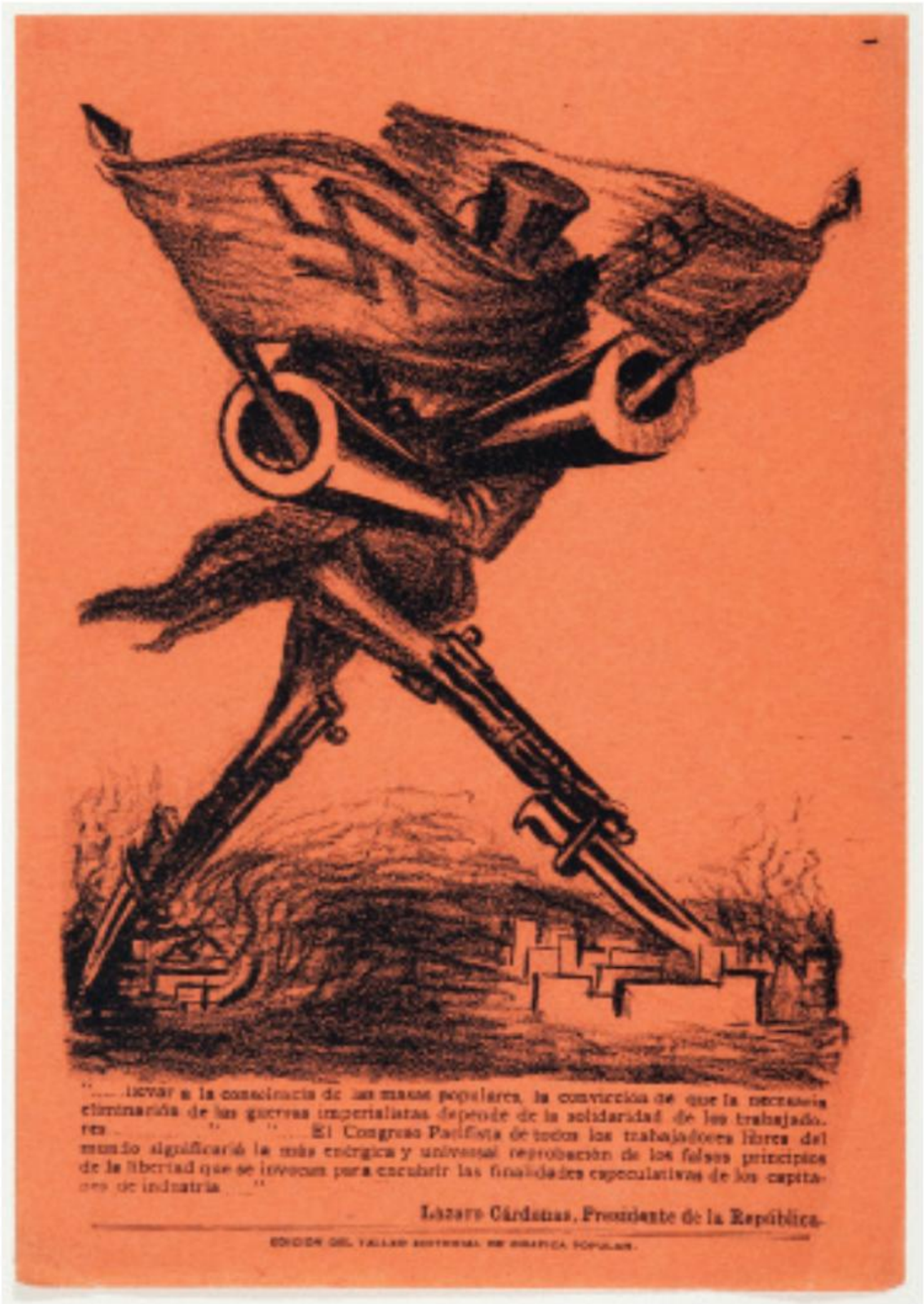
7.

JESÚS ESCOBEDO

El Fascismo, como combatir el fascismo, 1939

How to combat fascism

Lithograph
44 x 61.5cm, 17 5/16 x 24 ¼" (image)
46.5 x 67.5cm, 18 ¼ x 26 9/16" (sheet)


...incitar a la consciencia de las masas populares, la convicción de que la necesaria eliminación de las guerras imperialistas depende de la solidaridad de los trabajadores ... El Congreso Pacifista de todos los trabajadores libres del mundo significará la más enérgica y universal reprobación de los falsos principios de la libertad que se invocan para encubrir las finalidades especulativas de los capitanes de industria ...
Lázaro Cárdenas, Presidente de la República.

8.

LEOPOLDO MÉNDEZ

El imperialism y la Guerra, 1938
Imperialism and War

Lithograph
21 x 15cm, 8 ¼ x 5 7/8" (image)
23.7 x 16.5cm, 9 5/16 x 6 1/2" (sheet)

9.

LEOPOLDO MÉNDEZ

Las antorchas, 1947
The Torches

Linocut
30.3 x 41.5cm, 11 15/16 x 16 1/8” (image)
47.8 x 33cm, 18 ¾ x 12 7/8” (sheet)

10.

LEOPOLDO MÉNDEZ

Libertad de Prensa en tiempos de Don Porfirio Díaz, ca. 1945

Freedom of the Press during the reign of Porfirio Díaz

Linocut
30 x 21cm, 11 ¾ x 8 ¼" (image)
47.5 x 35.2cm, 18 ¾ x 13 7/8" (sheet)

11.

LEOPOLDO MÉNDEZ

El Sueño del imperialism, 1950
The Sleep (or dream) of Imperialism

Lithograph
31 x 42cm, 11 7/8 x 16 ½" (image)
44.5 x 58.4cm, 17 ½ x 23" (sheet)

12.

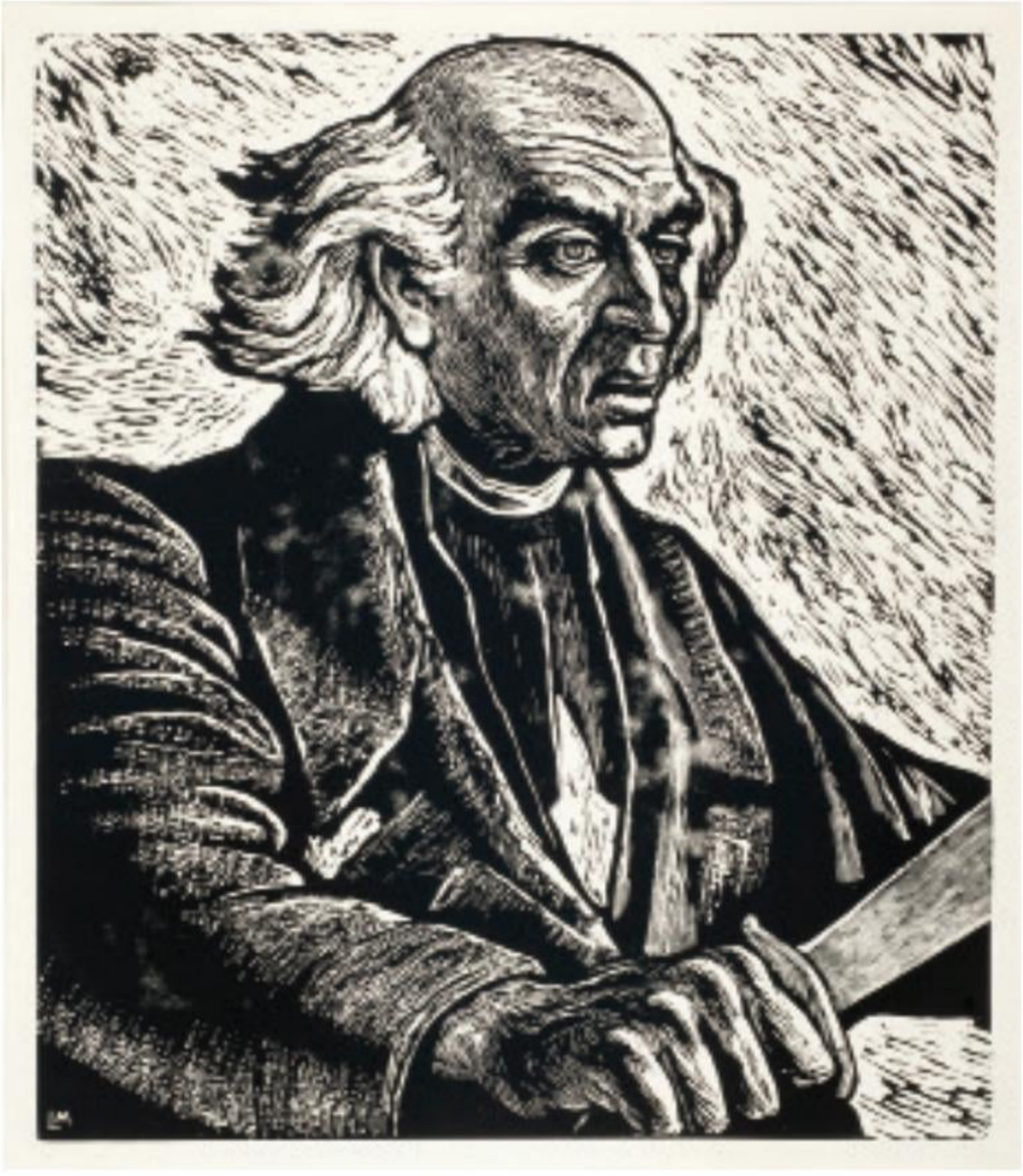
LEOPOLDO MÉNDEZ

¡Paremos la agresión a la clase obrera! Ayude usted a los huelguistas de Palau, Nueva Rosita y Cloete, 1950

Stop the Aggression Against the Working Class! Help the Strikers of Palau, Nueva Rosita and Cloete

Linocut
68.3 x 88.5cm, 26 ¼ x 34 7/8" (image)
69.5 x 97cm, 27 ½ x37 ½" (sheet)

¡PAREMOS LA AGRESION A LA CLASE OBRERA!
¡AYUDE USTED!
A LOS HUELGUISTAS DE PALAU, NUEVA ROSITA Y CLOETE
Envie su donativo a Raul Torres B. Campo numero 2 Palau, Coahuila



13.

LEOPOLDO MÉNDEZ

Padre Hidalgo
Father Hidalgo

Linocut
58 x 50.3cm, 22 7/8 x 19 13/16 (image)
70.2 x 64.5cm, 27 11/16 x 27 7/16” (sheet)

14.

ÁNGEL BRACHO

¡Victoria!, 1945
Victory

Linocut
74.5 x 53cm, 29 ¼ x 20 7/8” (image)
80.2 x 59.8cm, 31 5/8 x 23 5/8” (sheet)

¡VICTORIA!
Los artistas del Taller de Gráfica Popular nos unimos al júbilo de todos los trabajadores y hombres progresistas de México y del Mundo por el triunfo del glorioso Ejército Rojo y de las armas de todas las Naciones Unidas sobre la Alemania Nazi, como el paso más trascendente para la
DESTRUCCION TOTAL DEL FASCISMO

15.

ÁNGEL BRACHO

OEA & USA. OAS Organization of American States, after 1948

OEA & USA. OAS Organization of American States

Linocut
28.7 x 42.2cm, 11 3/8 x 16 ¾”
(image/ sheet)

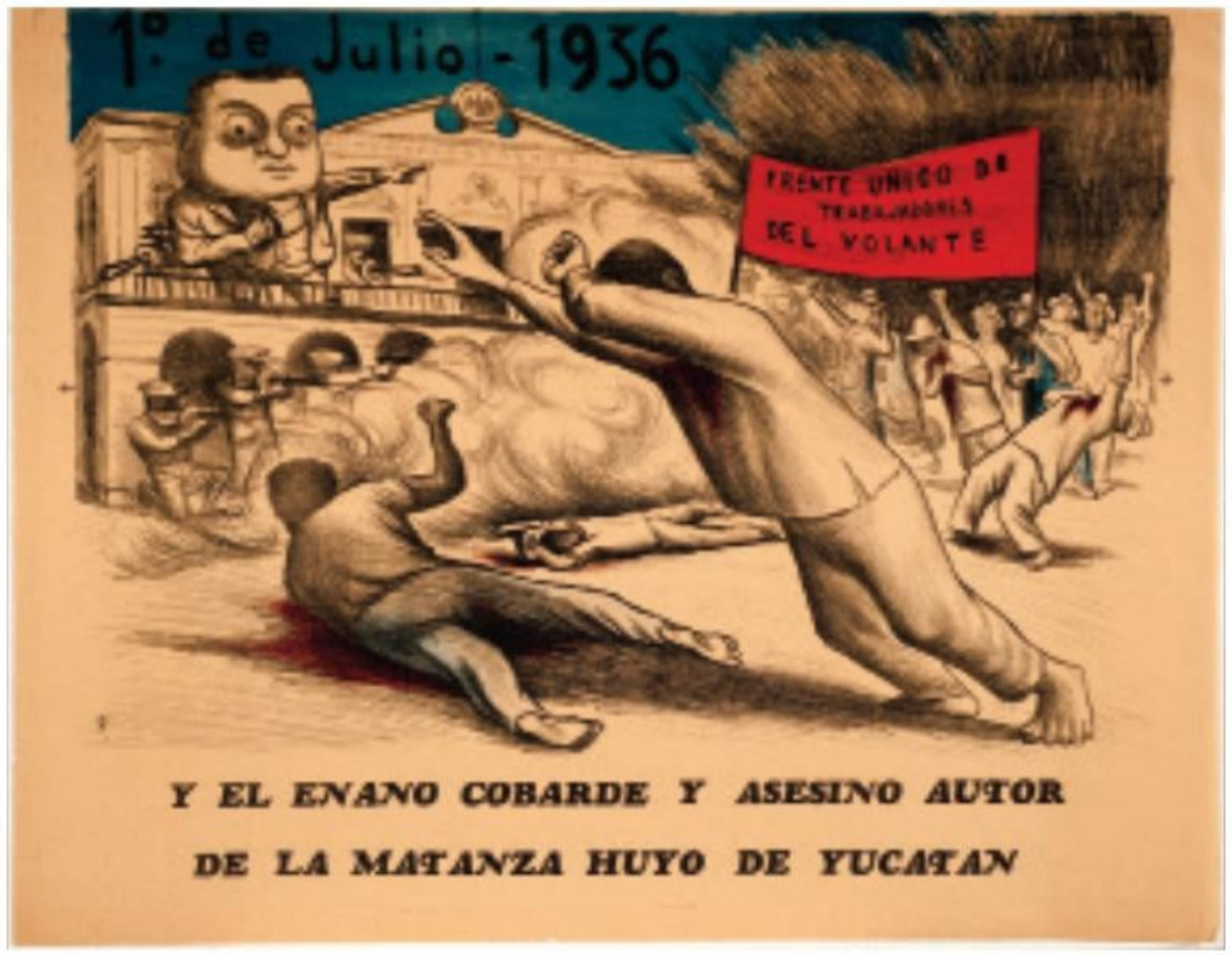
16.

JOSÉ CHÁVEZ MORADO

1 de julio 1936 y el enano cobarde y asesino autor de la matanza huyo de Yucatán, 1938

1 July 1936: the cowardly dwarf and the author of the assassinations fled Yucatán

Lithograph
46 x 58.5cm, 18 ¼ x 22 ½" (image)
49.5 x 65cm, 19 ½ x 25 1/8" (sheet)


1º de Julio - 1936
FRENTE UNICO DE TRABAJADORES DEL VOLANTE
Y EL ENANO COBARDE Y ASESINO AUTOR
DE LA MATANZA HUYO DE YUCATAN

17.

JOSÉ CHÁVEZ MORADO

La risa del pueblo. Con su musica o otra parte, 1939

The laughter of the public – away with your nonsense

Lithograph
57.5 x 38.5cm, 22 2/16 x 15 3/16" (image)
67.7 x 43.8cm, 26 11/16 x 17 ¼" (sheet)

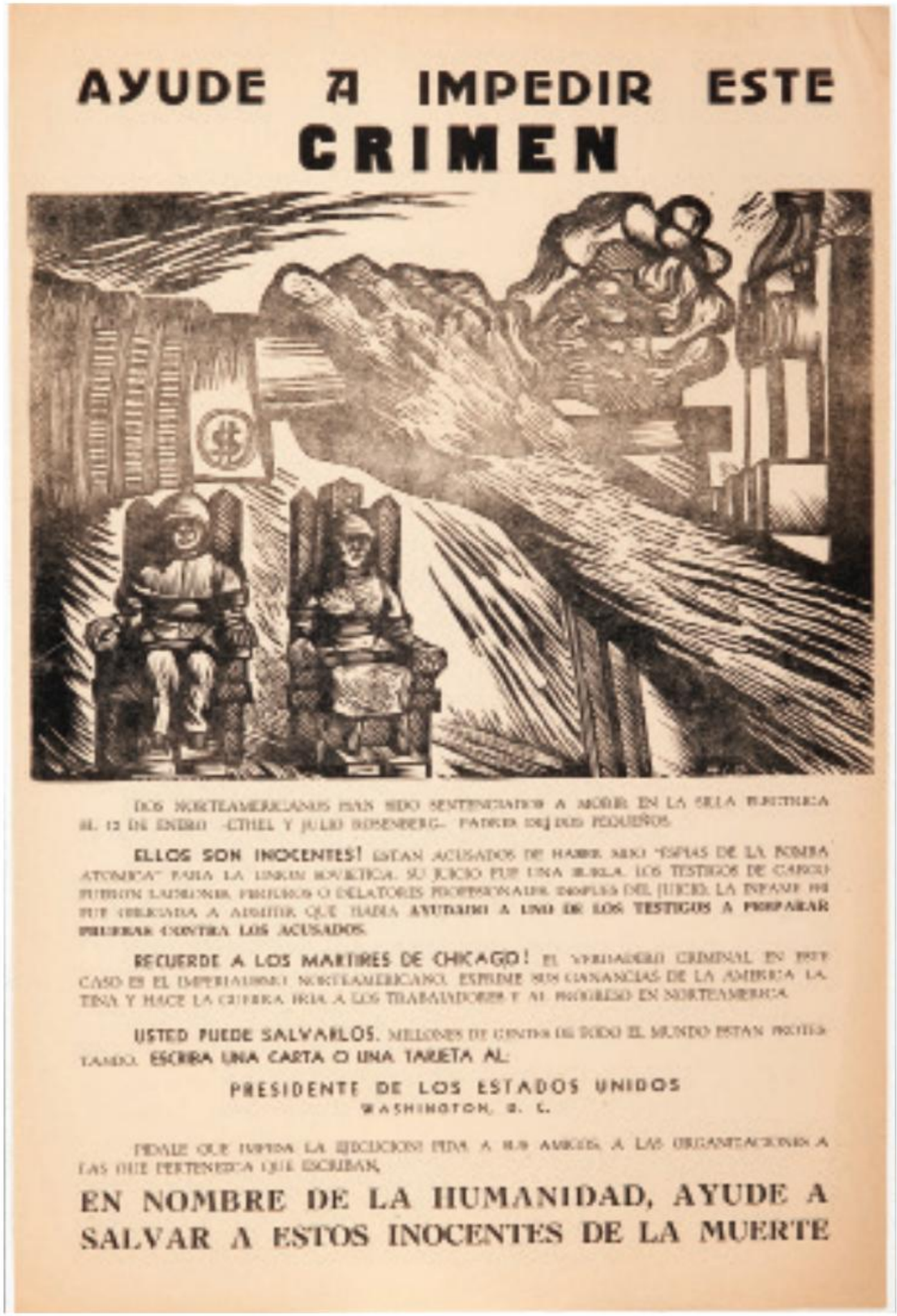
18.

FRANCISCO MORA

Ayude a impeder este crimen. Dos norte-americanos han sido sentenciados a morir en la silla eléctrica el 12 de enero. Ethel y Julio Rosenberg, 1953

Help Stop this Crime. Two North Americas Were Sentenced to Die in the Electric Chair on January 12th. Ethel and Julius Rosenberg

Linocut
54.5 x 39cm, 21 7/16 x 15 5/16" (image)
60.2 x 40.4cm, 23 ¾ x 15 7/8" (sheet)


AYUDE A IMPEDIR ESTE
CRIMEN
$
LOS NORTEAMERICANOS HAN SIDO SENTENCIADOS A MORIR EN LA SILLA ELECTRICA EL 12 DE ENERO -ETHEL Y JULIO ROSENBERG- PADRES de DOS PEQUEÑOS
¡ELLOS SON INOCENTES! ESTAN ACUSADOS DE HABER SIDO "ESPIAS DE LA BOMBA ATOMICA" PARA LA UNION SOVIETICA. SU JUICIO FUE UNA BURLA. LOS TESTIGOS DE CARGO FUERON LAUREADOS, PREMIADOS O DELATORES PROFESIONALES. DESPUES DEL JUICIO, LA FISCALIA NO FUE OBLIGADA A ADMITIR QUE HABIA AYUDADO A UNO DE LOS TESTIGOS A PREPARAR PRUEBAS CONTRA LOS ACUSADOS.
¡RECUERDE A LOS MARTIRES DE CHICAGO! EL VERDADERO CRIMINAL EN ESTE CASO ES EL IMPERIALISMO NORTEAMERICANO. ESPERA SUS GANANCIAS DE LA AMERICA LATINA Y HACE LA GUERRA HOY A LOS TRABAJADORES Y AL PROGRESO EN NORTEAMERICA.
USTED PUEDE SALVARLOS. MILLONES DE GENTES DE TODO EL MUNDO ESTAN PROTESTANDO. ESCRIBA UNA CARTA O UNA TARJETA AL:
PRESIDENTE DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS
WASHINGTON, D. C.
PIDALE QUE IMPIDA LA EJECUCION! PIDA A SUS AMIGOS, A LAS ORGANIZACIONES A LAS QUE PERTENEZCA QUE ESCRIBAN.
EN NOMBRE DE LA HUMANIDAD, AYUDE A SALVAR A ESTOS INOCENTES DE LA MUERTE

IV CONGRESO DE LA C.T.A.L.
SANTIAGO DE CHILE - 22-29 MARZO 1953
INDEPENDENCIA NACIONAL
PAZ
UNIDAD DE ACCION DE LOS TRABAJADORES
POR EL PAN, LA PAZ Y LA
INDEPENDENCIA NACIONAL

19.

PABLO O'HIGGINS AND FRANCISCO MORA

IV congreso de la C.T.A.L. Santiago de Chile. 22-29 marzo 1953, 1953

4th C.T.A.L. Congress, Santiago, Chile, 22-29 March, 1953

Linocut
94.5 x 66.2cm, 37 1/8 x 26 1/8" (image)
95 x 70.5cm, 37 ½ x 27 ¾" (sheet)

20.

PABLO O'HIGGINS

El desayuno (El almuerzo u Oberos comiendo), 1948, restrike of 1943 original

The Breakfast

Lithograph
31.1 x 41.5cm, 12 ¼ x 16 5/16" (image)
33.5 x 44.9cm, 13 3/16 x 17 5/8" (sheet)

21.

PABLO O'HIGGINS

Vendedor de flores, 1970
The Flower Vendor

Lithograph
23 x 16.5cm, 9 1/8 x 6 ½" (image)
35 x 24.7cm, 13 ¾ x 9 ¾" (sheet)

22.

ARTURO GARCÍA BUSTOS

El corridor de la United Fruit Company

The Ballad of the United Fruit Company

Linocut
55.9 x 38.5 cm, 22 x 15 1/8” (image)

CONFERENCIA LATINOAMERICANA
POR LA SOBERANIA NACIONAL. LA EMANCIPACION ECONOMICA Y LA PAZ
México. D. F. del 5 al 8 de marzo de 1961

23.

ARTURO GARCÍA BUSTOS

Conferencia latinoamericana por la sobrerania nacional, la emancipación económica y la paz, 1961

Latin American Peace Conference, March 1961

Woodblock
55.8 x 38.5cm, 22 x 15 1/8” (image)
70 x 47.5cm, 27 5/8 x 18 5/8” (sheet)

24.

ALBERTO BELTRÁN

Detengamos la Guerra, 1951
Let Us Stop the War

Linocut
117.4 x 152 cm, 46 1/8 x 59 3/4” (image)

25.

ALBERTO BELTRÁN

Vida y drama de México, 20 años de vida del Taller de Gráfica Popular, 1957

Life and drama of Mexico: twenty years in the life of the Taller de Gráfica Popular

Linocut
64.7 x 42cm, 25 ½ x 16 5/8" (image)
69.5 x 47.3cm, 27 3/8 x 18 5/8" (sheet)

26.

FANNY RAVEL

Al Dia, 1958, reprinted in 1976
Up to Date

Lithograph
47 x 27.5cm, 18 ½ x 10 13/16” (image)
56 x 35.5cm, 22 1.16 x 13 13/16” (sheet)

27.

CELIA CALDERÓN

México dueño de todos sus recursos, after 1952

Mexico, Master of all your Resources

Linocut
30 x 22 cm, 11 3/4 x 8 5/8” (image)
46.5 x 35.2 cm, 18 1/4 x 13 7/8” (sheet)

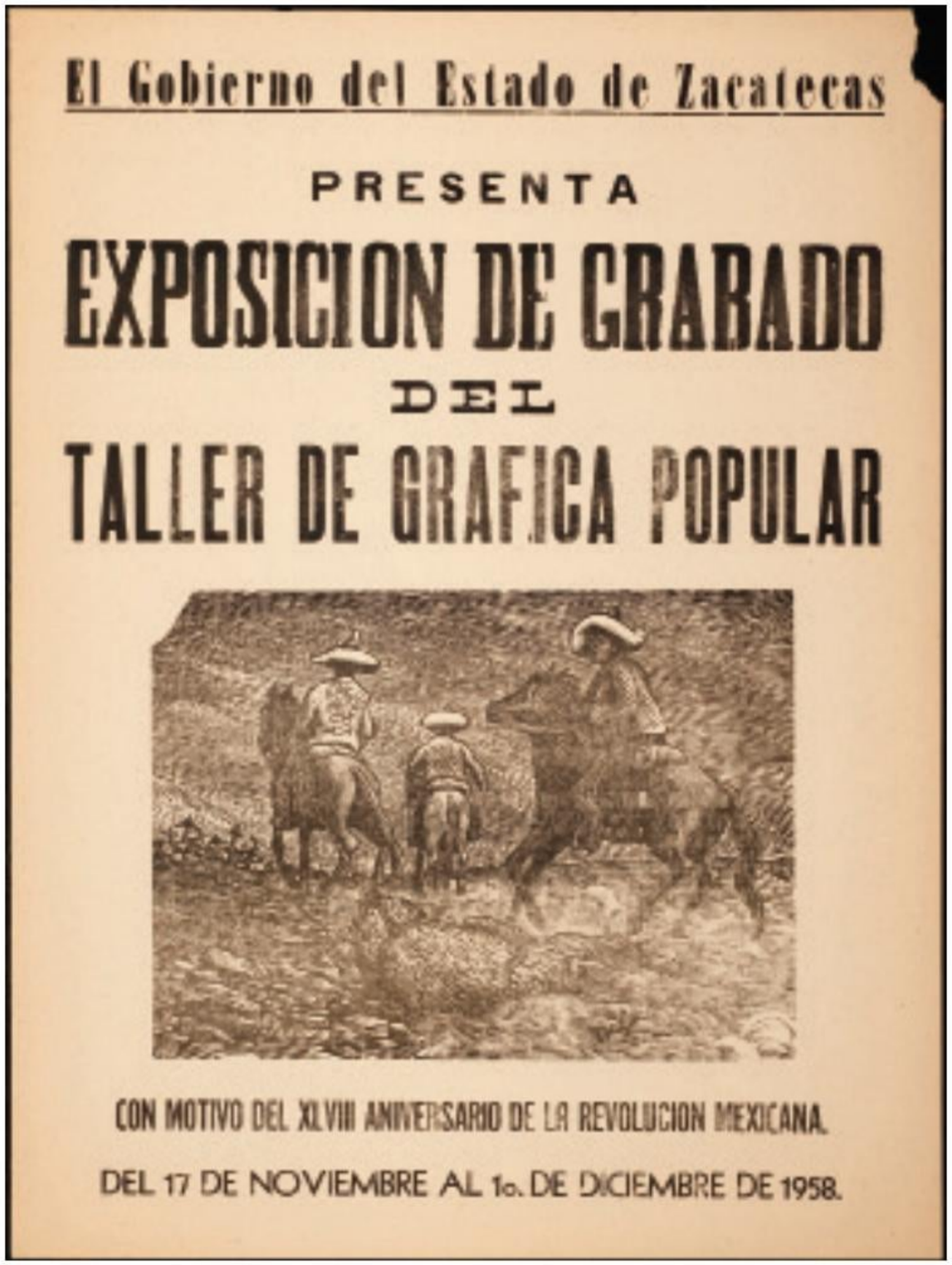
28.

M.A. HAMLIN

Monopolios, 1941

Monopolies

Lithograph
45 x 33.3cm, 17 ¾ x 13 1/8” (image)
61.2 x 47cm, 24 1/8 x 18 ½” (sheet)


El Gobierno del Estado de Zacatecas
PRESENTA
EXPOSICION DE GRABADO
DEL
TALLER DE GRAFICA POPULAR
CON MOTIVO DEL XLVIII ANIVERSARIO DE LA REVOLUCION MEXICANA.
DEL 17 DE NOVIEMBRE AL 1o. DE DICIEMBRE DE 1958.

29.

TALLER DE GRÁFICA POPULAR

Exposicion de Grabados, TGP, Diciembre 1958, 1958

Exhibition of Prints, TGP, December 1958

Woodblock
73.5 x 52.5cm, 29 x 21" (image)
80.6 x 60cm, 31 ¾ x 23 5/8" (sheet)

30.

IGNACIO AGUIRRE

Caldo de Perros
Dog Soup

Linocut
27 x 29.3cm, 10 5/8 x 11 9/16” (image)
32.2 x 39cm, 12 7/8 x 15 3/8” (sheet)

31.

CARLOS D.A.

El monstruo atomico

The Atomic Monster

Lithograph
39 x 52.5cm, 15 ¼ x 20 5/8” (image)
44.7 x 58.2cm, 17 ½ x 22 7/8” (sheet)

32.

UNKNOWN ARTIST

Los Olvidados
The Forgotten Ones

Poster, Photomechanical process
After original 1950 lithograph
30.7 x 39.7cm, 12 1/16 x 15 5/8” (image)
32.4 x 40.9cm, 12 ¾ x 16 1/8” (sheet)

33.

UNKNOWN ARTIST

Los Olvidados
The Forgotten Ones

Poster, Photomechanical process
After original 1950 lithograph
30.6 x39.8cm, 12 1/8 x 15 5/8” (image)
32.5 x 41.4cm, 12 13/16 x 16 ¼” (sheet)

34.

SERGIO SANTAMARÍA

Chiapas, 1998
Chiapas

Linocut
35 x 44.8cm, 13 7/8 x 17 5/8” (image)
50 x 65.1cm, 19 ¾ x 25 5/8” (sheet)

35.

SERGIO SANTAMARÍA

La Cornada, 2009
The Cornada

Linocut
30 x 20/7 cm, 11 7/8 x 8 1/4” (image)
38 x 28 cm, 15 x 11” (sheet)

Blank

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